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Castro Assassination Discussed by Top Officials in 1962

Associated Press

The Rockefeller Commission has minutes of a 1962 meeting which show that high administration officials discussed possible assassination of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, according to authoritative sources. The subject reportedly was dropped from consideration.

But while one source who has seen the minutes said the subject was immediately dismissed, two sources say a memo was written two days later by an assistant to then-Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara directing the Central Intelligence Agency to develop contingency plans for the possible assassination of the Cuban leader.

That memo, too, was withdrawn immediately, one source said. But he said subsequent U.S.-sponsored plots were made against Castro's life.

THE MEMO, which dealt with a variety of subjects, does not use the word "assassination," according to a source who had seen the memo, relying instead on more general terms such as "elimination."

But the source said the memo clearly provided authority for drawing up contingency plans for an assassination.

The sources declined to be identified.

The sources said minutes of the Aug. 10, 1962, meeting show it was attended by McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk; John A. McCone, director of the Central Intelligence Agency; and McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's adviser for national security affairs.

"THE SUBJECT (of killing Castro) was raised and immediately dismissed," one source who has seen the minutes said.

The memo, written by Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, a McNamara assistant, was immediately withdrawn, one source said, although he acknowledged the subsequent attempts on Castro's life.

Reached by phone, McNamara and Lansdale both said they had no recollection of either the memo or the meeting.

The minutes describe a meeting of a special group known as Operation Mongoose, which approved all CIA covert activities against the regime, the sources said. Its official

title was Special Group (Augmented.)

The minutes show that a fifth member, Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, was absent, according to the sources.

THE MINUTES do not make clear whether a specific plan was discussed or whether any approval or disapproval for a plot against Castro was given.

The subsequent attempts made on Castro's life were separate from previously reported CIA involvement with Mafia figures Sam Giancana and John Roselli in a plot to kill Castro prior to the Bay of Pigs, the same source stated.

The later attempts were based on plans drawn up by an unidentified middle-level CIA official responsible for contingency planning connected with problems dealing with unmanageable foreign leaders. These contingency plans, which also have been obtained by the Rockefeller Commission, covered every possibility from a coup to assassination to bribery, the source said.

The planning effort was terminated when the official in charge was transferred to the CIA station in Rome, the source said.

IT COULD NOT be learned whether the Rockefeller Commission has been able to establish any connection between the meeting, the memo, the contingency planning and the subsequent attempts on Castro's life.

Bundy, Rusk and McCone all have appeared as witnesses before the eight-member panel headed by Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, but the substance of their testimony could not be learned. McNamara and Lansdale have been questioned by the commission staff, sources said.

The assassination plot involving Giancana and Roselli originated during the Eisenhower administration, one source said, and was terminated after the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion. In 1962, Rob-

ert Kennedy was warned by then CIA General Counsel Lawrence Houston that Justice Department prosecution of either Giancana or Roselli might result in the disclosure of the assassination plot, several sources have said.

"KENNEDY SAID, 'Next time you deal with the Mafia, come to me first,' but otherwise he didn't voice any objections," one source said. Documents confirming the meeting between Kennedy and Houston reportedly have been seen by the Rockefeller Commission.

In one of those documents, former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover reportedly expressed his fear that Giancana might use his CIA connection to blackmail law-enforcement authorities.

The Rockefeller Commission originally was created by President Ford to investigate allegations of massive domestic spying by the CIA. But its mandate has been expanded to include the area of alleged foreign assassinations.

CIA 1.04 LANDSALE
EDWARD

CIA 4.01 OPERATIONS
Mongoose

CASTRO, Fidel

CIA 1.03 HOUSTON

LAWRENCE

ORIG. MAFIA